

Groundings

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GROUNDINGS

A PUBLICATION OF THE WALTER RODNEY FOUNDATION



VOLUME 2 - ISSUE 1
SPRING 2015

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Photography by Tony Foster, student at Kennesaw State University.

From L to R: Guy Martin, Bobby Hill, Chapurukha Kusimba, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Patricia Rodney, Kanini Z. Rodney-Phillips, Makungu Akinyela, Asha T. Rodney, Hashim Gibrill, and Jesse Benjamin

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Greetings!

We are pleased to present this issue of *Groundings*, a publication of [The Walter Rodney Foundation](#). We want to share with you news about the Foundation's activities and to provide a platform for discussion and engagement on issues related to the ideas of Walter Rodney.

As promised, this issue begins with coverage of key Walter Rodney Foundation (WRF) events from 2014. First, we review the 11th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium: "Africa: The Gateway," held on March 21st-22nd, 2014. We begin with some brief text covering the program's highlights, and a copy of the Symposium poster. Once you click on the poster, you can view the full Symposium Program. There were many exceptional speakers and presenters, great student participation, and our first full Groundings sessions.

There is a growing local and international community that has coalesced around the annual Symposia. Several hundred people attended over the 2-day program, and the selected photos capture a glimpse of the energy and good vibes shared by all. In a program packed with highlights, it was perhaps the deeply personal and moving recollections of Bobby Hill, and Ngugi wa Thiongo's impromptu birthday song to Asha Rodney in Gikuyu that moved the crowd the most.

Next, we review the 2nd Annual Walter Rodney Speakers Series (WRSS), held from January 23rd – April 24th, 2014. We begin with some text, explaining the public lecture series and its developments, and follow this with the official poster used to promote the WRSS. Here too, we hope the photos capture some of the excitement of the process, as students taking the series for college credit, and members of the community participated in the consistently enlightening discussion forums. Of special note are the unique photos shared with us by WRSS speaker Sue Ross, that depict Walter Rodney and Sue Ross while Walter Rodney was conducting research and teaching at the Institute of the Black World (IBW) in Atlanta.

In the "Special Attention" section, we present an original contribution from BocaFloja, a recurring guest contributor to the Annual Symposium and Speakers Series, where he analyzes the context and meaning of the recent massacre of college students in Ayotzinapa, Mexico. This is a revised version of a speech BocaFloja delivered at Kennesaw State University in January 2015, en route to joining a discussion on police brutality for the launch of the 3rd Annual Walter Rodney Speakers Series, hosted by a panel of youth activists from Project South.

Next you will find the poster for the upcoming 12th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium, to be held March 20-21 in Atlanta, around the theme "Hungry Nation, Hungry World: Engendering Healthy Sustainable Food Systems." The Symposium will explore the global need for adequate, nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate foods and the issues of underdevelopment, colonialism, globalization and land-alienation that impact efforts to develop healthy sustainable food systems. Please join us at the Symposium and participate in the Groundings Sessions or watch live-streaming

of main portions of the event if you cannot make it in person.

We are also very pleased to share the announcement of the recently formed Walter Rodney Press (WRP), which just released a new, authorized edition of *The Groundings with My Brothers*. The WRP is a non-traditional press, whose function is to exclusively publish and republish works by Dr. Walter Rodney. This section is rounded out by some memorable WRF-related moments that were captured in recent photos.

We then publish the words of Dr. Michael O. West, as he reflected on the meaning of the 40th anniversary of the publication of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. We are pleased to share these important thoughts, previously presented at S.U.N.Y Binghamton, with our audience here! We conclude this issue with an updated listing of the WRF Board and Committee members; remembrances of friends and fellow travelers that joined the ancestors this past year; and information about the Rodney Papers in the AUC RWWL archive.

Finally, we continue to accept contributions to *Groundings*. These should be short (no more than 3000 words), clearly written, with a minimal use of jargon. We welcome critical analyses but not profanity. Articles, book reviews, commentary, letters to the editors, poems and other forms of artistic expression should be sent to GroundingsJournal@gmail.com. It is not our intent to publish everything that is submitted.

We look forward to the upcoming Rodney Symposium and hope you will join us in person if you are in the area. Look out for the next issue of *Groundings* which will share with you the details and photos from the 3rd Annual WRSS and the 12th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium and updates about other WRF projects. Ashe.

Jesse Benjamin
Firoze Manji
Aajay Murphy
Asha T. Rodney

WALTER RODNEY SYMPOSIUM ---- REPORT

The 11th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium

March 21st - 22nd, 2014

“Africa: The Gateway”

The Symposium explored economic development, policies, governance, relationships, social justice and the arts as they relate to the continent.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The keynote speaker for the Eleventh Annual Walter Rodney Symposium was *Dr. Shelby F. Lewis*, Professor Emeritus at Clark Atlanta University, Executive Director of The Lewis Foundation and international development consultant.

The distinguished guest speaker for the Symposium was *Dr. Robert (Bobby) Hill*, Professor Emeritus of History and Research Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), renowned Marcus Garvey Scholar and a Visiting Fellow at The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, W.I.

HIGHLIGHTS

REMARKS from *Her Excellency, Ambassador Tebelelo Mazile Seretse*, Ambassador of the Republic of Botswana to the United States

A CONVERSATION with *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o*, University of California, Irvine

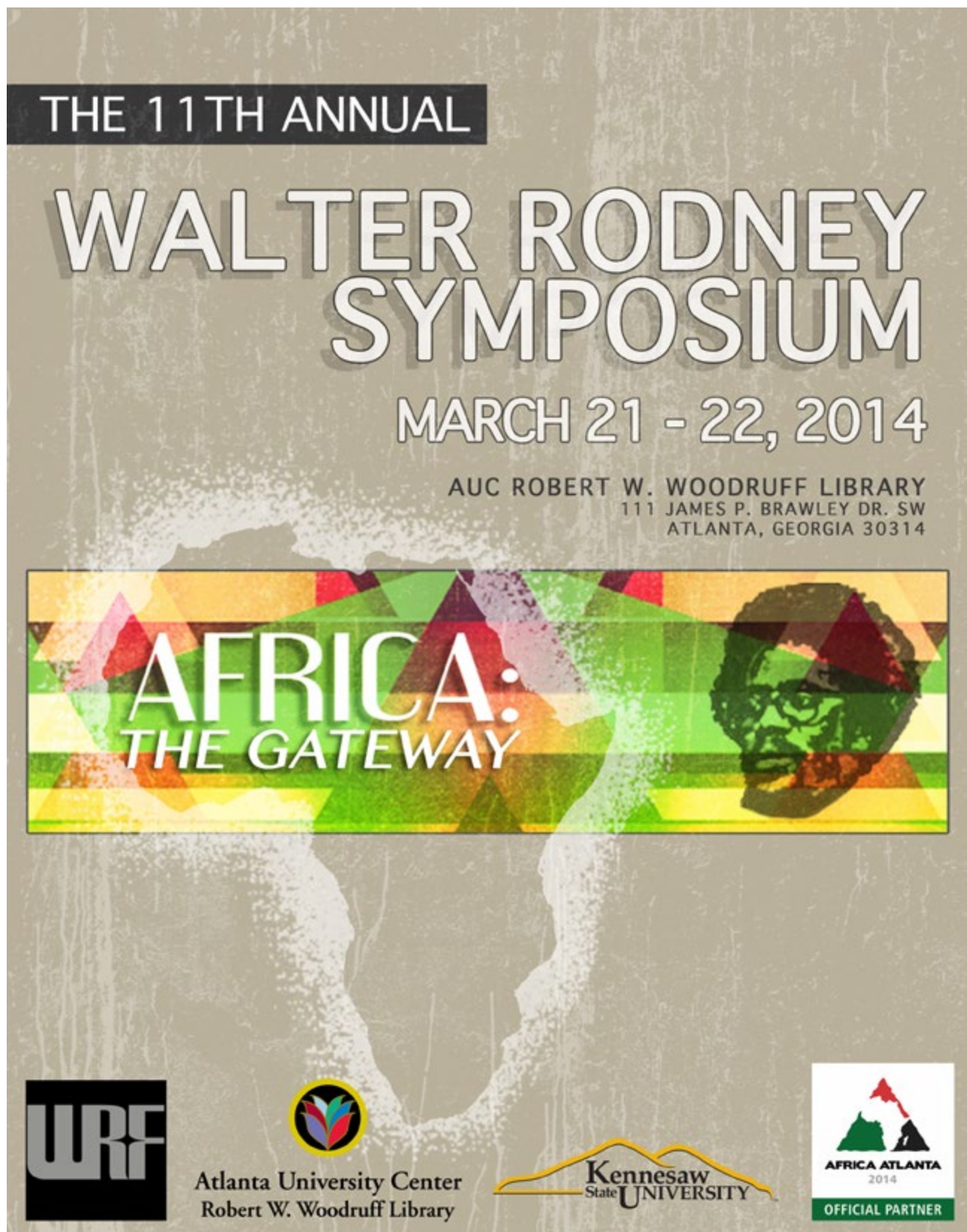
PRESENTATIONS BY

Dr. Akanmu Adebayo (Kennesaw State University), *Dr. Chapurukha Kusimba* (American University), *Dr. Guy Martin* (Winston-Salem State University), *Dr. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja* (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), *Friends of the Congo* incl. *Kwame Lyndon Wilburg* (Host/WRFG Beyond Borders/Atlanta FOTC), and *Maurice Carney* (Founder/Executive Director FOTC National)

GROUNDINGS SESSIONS facilitated by *Attorney Mawuli Mel Davis* (Davis Bozeman Law), and *Dr. Makungu Akinyela* (Georgia State University)

CULTURAL LINEUP featuring *Amkoullel* (Mali), *Bocafloja* (Mexico/NYC), *Keur-Gui* (Senegal) and *Vox Sambou* (Haiti)

Held at the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library, 111 James P. Brawley Dr. SW, Atlanta, GA.



Poster for the 11th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium, 2014.



Dr. Jacqueline Royster, Dr. Shelby Lewis, Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall and "Able" Mable Thomas, State Representative, sitting as representative members of our legendary audience.



Mawuli Mel Davis, Esq., Asha T. Rodney, Esq., Dr. Patricia Rodney and Dr. Makungu Akinyela pose for a post-Groundings photo.



Friends of the Congo (L to R: Kwame Wilburg, Nia Mitchell, Dr. Sam Livingston and Dr. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja) panel "Breaking the Silence: Why Global Solidarity with Congo Matters."



Vox Sambou, Thiat and Kilifeu participate in the Groundings session by sharing their experiences with hip-hop and social movement in their countries.



Dr. Robert Hill recollects his time with Dr. Walter Rodney.



Dr. Jesse Benjamin, Dr. Kanini Z. Rodney-Phillips and Asha T. Rodney, Esq., pose with WRF comrade BocaFloja.



Ras Kofi and Dr. Ward Churchill in the hip hop Groundings session.



The audience directs their attention to a question during a Q&A session.



Dr. Robert Hill and Dr. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja greet each other.



Kennesaw State University students and alumni, Carlton Kweku Duncan, Njoki wa Ngugi and Manny Berry.



Dr. Jesse Benjamin, WRF board member, with Dr. Chapurukha Kusimba.



Mawuli Mel Davis, Esq., initiates the Groundings sessions.



Her Excellency Dr. Tebelelo Mazile Seretse, Ambassador of the Republic of Botswana to the US, poses with Dr. Patricia Rodney during a break in the lectures.



A standing ovation for Dr. Robert Hill.

WALTER RODNEY SPEAKER'S SERIES ---- REPORT

The 2nd Annual Walter Rodney Speaker's Series *January - May, 2014*

Thursdays, 5-7pm at the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library

OVERVIEW

The Walter Rodney Speaker Series (WRSS) is a groundbreaking public lecture series that explores the life and work of Dr. Walter Rodney and his core contributions to Pan-Africanism, development theory, emancipatory pedagogy, and theories of race and class in the Caribbean, Africa and the rest of the world. The WRSS is conducted by Dr. Jesse Benjamin, Coordinator, African and African Diaspora Studies and Director, Global South Research Consortium and supported by the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library (AUC RWWL), the Walter Rodney Foundation (WRF), and Kennesaw State University (KSU).

Dr. Walter Rodney was a leading historian and scholar in the Pan-African tradition, with significant ties to the Atlanta area, but whose life was tragically cut short in 1980 when he was assassinated in his homeland, Georgetown, Guyana. Despite his death, Rodney's works are a living history and this lecture series seeks to keep his stories, his scholarship, and his perspectives in contemporary discourse; to introduce or re-introduce a cross-section of the public to this great man; and to explore how his legacy changed the path of others.

The public lectures were held at the AUC RWWL, from January 23rd – April 24th, on almost every Thursday night from 5:30 – 7:00pm, with students enrolled for credit at Clark Atlanta University (CAU), Morehouse College or KSU. The Series was widely publicized in Atlanta, via radio, print and social media, and attended by a broad cross-section of the public, as well as students from the AUC and neighboring schools. One session, during Spring Break at the AUC, was held off-site, at the Auburn Avenue Research Library. During the week of the 11th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium, the WRSS promoted and was embedded in the Annual Symposium. WRSS speakers were extremely relevant and professionally distinguished in their various fields, discussions were always very deep and engaging, and the participation of the students was exceptional.

There was continued growth and support in the resource base for the WRSS in 2014 that made the 2nd Annual Speakers Series possible. The Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities at KSU generously renewed his support; the AUC RWWL renewed and increased theirs, to include both honoraria and in-kind resource support; and the WRF continued and expanded its supportive role in numerous capacities. New alliances with Project South and Universidad Sin Fronteras, provided additional in-kind support and sponsorship that included promotion, connection with constituencies and the involvement of high school students. On average, attendees varied from 50-100 per week.

THE SECOND ANNUAL
WALTER RODNEY
PUBLIC SPEAKERS SERIES
 Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library
 Thursdays, 5:30-6:45pm - Spring 2014
 111 James P. Brawley Drive SW, Atlanta, GA 30314



1/23 "Walter Rodney: A Framework for Knowledge, Analysis and Inspired Action"
 Asha T. Rodney, Walter Rodney Foundation & Andrea Jackson with an Archives Overview

1/30 "Race, Class, & Walter Rodney in the 1970s"
 Derrick White, History, Florida Atlantic University & "Education & Social Justice"
 "Able" Mable Thomas, Founding Director, Greater Vine City Opportunities Program Inc.

2/6 "Liberation by Labyrinth: Walter Rodney's Pedagogy of Caribbean History"
 Geoffroy de Laforcade, History, Norfolk University & "Grounding Walter Rodney in Critical Pedagogy"
 Seneca Vaught, History, Kennesaw State University

2/13 "Colonialism & Genocide: Reflections on Sartre's Formulation"
 Ward Churchill, American Indian Movement

2/20 Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amílcar Cabral
 Book Launch & Author's Roundtable
 Bill Fletcher, Makungu Akinyela, Kali Akuno, Ajamu Baraka, Jesse Benjamin, Mustafah Dhadha, Hashim Gibris, Brandon Lundy & Asha T. Rodney

2/27 "Legal Theory and Colonialism"
 Natsu Saito & Tanya Washington, GA State University, College of Law, & Jed Kinnison, Independent Scholar

3/6 "Archaeology & Underdevelopment: Re-Examining the Material Record of the Colonial Era"
 Chapurukha Kusimba, Chair, Anthropology Dept, American University

3/13 "Walter Rodney & the Scholar/Activists of the IBW"
 Sue Ross, PhotoGriot, IBW Associate & "A Battle of Ideas: The Role of Media in the Liberation of Caribbean & Latin American Peoples"
 Lyndon (Kwame) Wilburg, Jose Perez, Sobukwe Kuumba & Don Rojas

3/20-21 The 11th Annual Walter Rodney Symposium
 "Africa: The Gateway"
 Groundings, Keynotes, Panels, and Many Other Details, TBA

4/10 "Georgia Gullah-Geechee Rights: Land, Tax, and Underdevelopment"
 Speakers, Community Leaders, and More, TBA

4/17 "History & Self-Confidence: From Walter Rodney to Michael Manley, The Development of Jamaica's National Identity"
 Fraganio Ledgister, Political Science, Clark Atlanta University & "Thinking Politically About Underdevelopment"
 Andrew J. Douglas, Political Science, Morehouse College

4/24 FINAL SPEAKERS: TBA

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WRF
 Walter Rodney Foundation

 Atlanta University Center
 Robert W. Woodruff Library

African & African Diaspora Studies
 Kennesaw State University

Poster for the 2014 Walter Rodney Speakers Series.
 Click the image for more information.



Asha T. Rodney, Esq., Ajamu Baraka, Bill Fletcher, Jr., Dr. Makungu Akinyela, Dr. Hashim Gibrill, and Dr. Brandon Lundy during the book launch for *Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amílcar Cabral*.



The audience watches as Tanya Washington, Esq., delivers her wisdom on Legal Theory and Colonialism.



Asha T. Rodney, Esq., GA State Representative "Able" Mable Thomas, Dr. Jesse Benjamin, Dr. Derrick White and Dr. Patricia Rodney pose after great presentations by Thomas and White.



Dr. Derrick White discusses race, class and Walter Rodney in the 1970s.



Dr. Geoffroy de Laforcade passionately presents "Liberation by Labyrinth: Walter Rodney's Pedagogy of Caribbean History."



The class portion meets with the inclusion of Dr. Geoffroy de Laforcade (after the public lecture).



Posing outside of the hip hop show that follows the Walter Rodney Symposium, an extension of the class, [from L to R] Kilifeu (of Keur-Gui), Vox Sambou, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Thiat (of Keur-Gui), DJ Gath (of Keur-Gui), Dr. Jesse Benjamin, and Dr. Chap Kusimba.



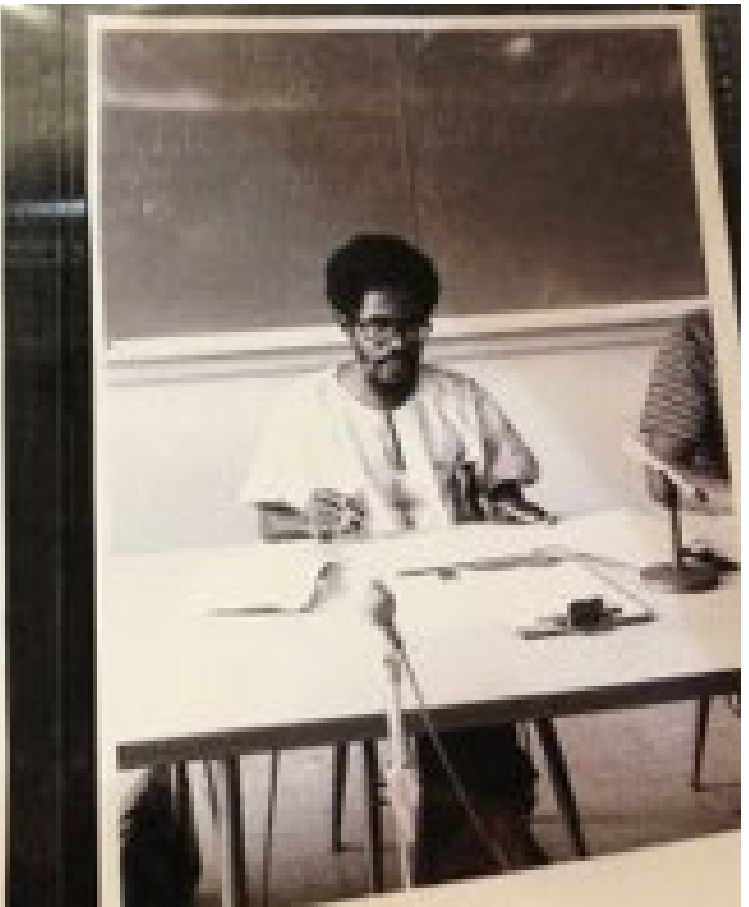
The class discusses a lecture in conjunction with the required readings.



A blend of community activists and students watch a lecture.



The audience engages with Tanya Washington's presentation.



During her presentation, Sue Ross shared photos from Dr. Rodney's time at the IBW in Atlanta. On the left is Sue Ross herself, and on the right is Dr. Walter Rodney (c. 1974).

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Notes on Ayotzinapa

Bocafloja

The current affairs going on in Mexico are anything but new. Years of history that has been manipulated grotesquely finally induce the construction of the actual “narco-state” in power today.

My responsibility with you today resides in sharing a critical analysis coming from a decolonial perspective, from a body that has been made invisible, animalized and has no attachment to the constructions of identity under the framework of Mexico as a nation.

Mexico, as most countries in Latin America after their processes of independence from Spain, adopted a model of internal colonialism, in which predominantly white Mexican-born Spaniards, became the new benefactors and administrators of resources, wealth, and power. They elaborated an agenda in which the discourse of “miscegenation” and “a harmonic melting pot” was romanticized in order to create a false sense of inclusion and national pride that remains as one of the most effective instruments of normalization.

Even when Mexico is fully subordinate to the economic dynamics of the United States, when it comes to morality, aesthetics, cultural values and intellectual references, Mexico is still deeply influenced and connected to Spain and France. A permanent aspiration that seems to be the only legitimate standard for success, good taste, and ethics that is deeply rooted in the psyche of each person born and raised in Mexico.

Brown and black bodies are automatically conditioned to a process of inferiorization not only in tangible forms, but in the imagination of the people as well.

After the Mexican revolution, the political party in power, P.R.I., remained at the head of the country for 70 years as a disguised dictatorship with an infamous history of corruption, misallocation of funds and resources, state terrorism, and electoral fraud. They are also responsible for the murder and forced disappearance of hundreds of young activists in 1968 and 1971, thousands of women in Ciudad Juarez, the Acteal massacre---in which 45 people were murdered by the state because of their open support to the Zapatista movement,---and hundreds of other unfortunate violent events in which the government through its special agencies or paramilitary groups was the orchestrator.

By the year 2000, the political party that represented the interests of the conservative, right wing upper middle class citizens, P.A.N., took power and ushered the most violent era in the history of modern Mexico. One hundred and twenty one thousand violent deaths were officially registered between 2007 and 2012.

Symbolically, death acquired a different meaning. Images of decapitated bodies hanging from footbridges became daily figures in the landscape of Mexican streets.

Fifty three million people living in extreme poverty represents a platform in which the glamorization of the narco lifestyle, and the apparent easy engagement in it, represents an immediate possibility of access to money and power.

Ayotzinapa is located in the southern state of Guerrero, Mexico, in a small rural community in which the Raul Isidro Burgos Teaching School is situated. 42 students from this school are missing after police in the city of Iguala, Guerrero, opened fire on their buses and kidnapped a group of 43 of them. Some of the students dispersed and escaped, while many others were loaded onto police vehicles to be taken to an unknown destination.

The final communiqué of the police and government ensures that all the students were shot, killed and incinerated by a drug cartel. Forensic experts hired by the families of the missing students certified that the ashes founded at the site do not correspond to their bodies as the government asseverates.

The students were mostly from indigenous communities, campesino families, living in severe poverty, receiving academic training at a public institution that is considered an enclave of anti-capitalist activism with a history of years in leftist militancy.

The government strategy was clear; they wanted to manage the situation as an isolated episode, as a wrong decision and official misconduct from local authorities, accusing a drug cartel as the perpetrator.

A few months later, the local mayor was detained and incarcerated as the only responsible entity from the government in the whole case, again, avoiding the recognition of a structural problem.

Sending a scapegoat to jail was not a convincing action to the majority of the population, who took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction, turning the protest into one of the largest and most visible in the past years.

But beyond a journalistic analysis, our duty resides in deconstructing violence, systemic terrorism and the ulterior motives that instigated this and other incidents as part of this carnival of the absurd.

The way the body of the oppressed is portrayed in mainstream media is nothing but a disgusting exercise of animalization, and an efficient distractor that transforms genuine youth political organization into common criminality.

Mexico's first lady was strategically chosen by the power structure to sensitize the working class due to her career as a soap opera celebrity. Televisa, the number one media conglomerate in Latin America, which is based in Mexico, plays a fundamental role by partnering with the Mexican state when it comes to be the primary administrator of media outlet and information.

A combined agenda that intersects permanently creating a persistent low intensity bombing on peoples minds. Manipulation and control is guarantee.

What is the solution for this? What is the political agenda of participation that we are supposed to engage in?

In Mexican society amongst militant circles class struggle is considered "the root of all evil", so it becomes almost impossible to open other routes for analysis and resolution. The Latin American average militant has some sort of a fetish with the Soviet Union, with austerity models that are

nothing but naïve rhetoric in today's geopolitical map. More than once I've been praised for my cultural production and work in the community while attacked for the use of Jordan shoes and for my love to R&B music. The same militants that call themselves internationalists don't hesitate to shout testimonies that happen to be profoundly anti-black hiding behind the excuse of U.S. imperialism. Positions of power within the left in Latin America are occupied by white Latino Marxists, that deep inside their own privilege are still uncomfortable with melanin and with the cultural, social and political practices coming from black and brown bodies.

Some of us cannot relate to the processes or resistance articulated by the white left.

I understand politics as a game of strategies in a historical moment like this. Assuming a divisive position wouldn't be beneficial to our cause at all, but it's also fundamental that we keep our critical posture towards the events in which the element of race has been absolutely ignored and dismissed as if it wasn't the most frequent pattern associated to systemic terrorism.

At this point Frantz Fanon's thesis on the end of the world and how the civilization as we know it would have to come to an end in order for us to really change the condition of existence of the oppressed body, starts making more and more sense in the back of my head. I already suffer from anxiety and stress disorders, so while I wait for the world to collapse I feel the need to keep finding ways to continue the negotiation with the power structure.

I believe that the work I do as an artist represents a micro-transgression to the hegemony, appealing to the possibility of replicate significantly and resignify its agenda, without fully compromising to the non-profit bureaucracy, the corporate world or the government cultural institutions.

There are several layers of negotiation; people in a place like Mexico find it really hard to believe in the platforms of political parties when none of them have helped improve their condition.

So, where does artistic expression fit in this equation, while detaching from "Latino and Mexican identity," and at the same time remaining critical toward leftist movements?

Probably nowhere, nevertheless, our mission is to keep developing the peripheral processes of resistance that we have created over the years.

By peripheral we are not only describing space and location in regards to power as the center, but our own bodies, acknowledging that no matter if we occupy centralized spaces, our condition will remain inferiorized, first as individuals therefore as artists or creators.

I remember having a conversation with a good friend of mine talking about what is to be radical today, and we came to the conclusion that in certain cases and conditions, it would be way more transgressive to produce an event screening a Richard Pryor comedy set, than a lecture on intersectionality.

In our case, based on our corporeal condition of existence, healing is not some new age weekend activity but an irremediable act of survival.

The 12th Annual **WALTER RODNEY SYMPOSIUM**



HUNGRY NATION, HUNGRY WORLD:
Engendering Healthy Sustainable Food Systems

MARCH 20TH & 21ST 2015
2pm–8pm 12:30pm–6pm



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FIROZE MANJI
THOUGHTWORKS

K. RASHID NURI
TRULY LIVING WELL CENTER

FATMA ALLOO
TANZANIA MEDIA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

MENCER "DON" EDWARDS
JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABILITY ASSOCIATES

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LINDA JOHNSON
FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

GROUNDINGS SESSION

TRIBUTES

PANEL PRESENTATIONS



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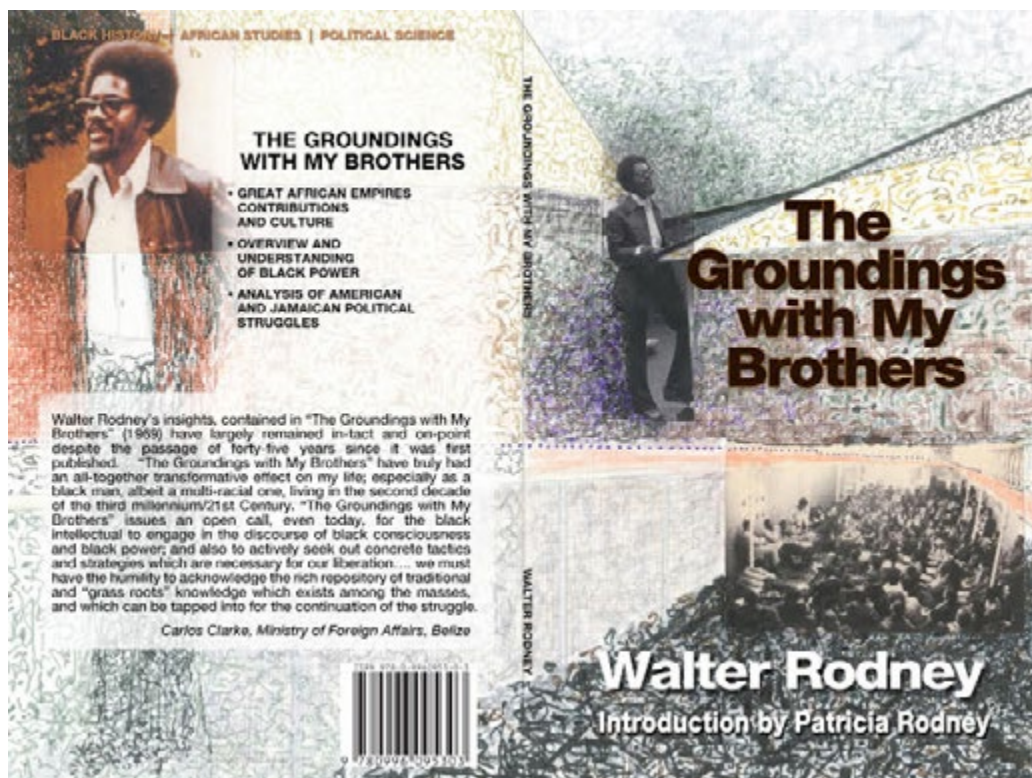
The Groundings with My Brothers **Republished**

The Groundings with My Brothers is a collection of the main speeches made by Walter Rodney while he was in Jamaica for nine months in 1968, and at the Black Writer's Conference in Montreal in October 1968. Two of the chapters: "Statement of the Jamaican Situation," and "African History in the Service of Black Revolution," are regarded as 'the straws that broke the camel's back.' The Jamaican government, who had already placed Rodney under surveillance for his engagement with Rastafarians and other disenfranchised communities, declared Rodney persona non-grata and a threat to national security, and banned him from reentry into Jamaica. After a student protest, led by now Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Honorable Ralph Gonsalves, the "Rodney Riots" spread off campus to the capital Kingston and became what many historians consider the most significant uprising in Jamaica since 1938.

The Groundings with My Brothers is considered one of the best pieces of protest literature to come out of the Caribbean during that period. Originally published in 1969, this groundbreaking work by Dr. Walter Rodney remains germane today, 45 years after its original publication. It offers compelling insights into many issues which continue to plague the Caribbean and the African Diaspora. It is telling that some of the conditions that existed then continue to be pervasive today.

The significant new Introduction is by Dr. Patricia Rodney, and the new Afterword by Dr. Verene A. Shepherd. Both previous introductions by Richard Small and Omowale are included in this version. The cover design is by E. Bruce Phillips, Jr. This 2014 republication of *The Groundings with my Brothers* is the first publication by the Walter Rodney Press.

Dr. Walter Rodney is the author of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* and is recognized as one of the Caribbean's most brilliant minds.



WALTER RODNEY PRESS

The Walter Rodney Press, LLC was established in February 2014 to ensure the legacy of Walter Rodney and to share his life and works with future generations of students, scholars, researchers, activists and communities globally.

Walter Rodney Press is a non-traditional press. Our function is to exclusively publish and republish works by Dr. Walter Rodney. We do this through collaborations, partnerships or relationships with traditional presses, literary agents and publishing houses.

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Memorable Moments



On Sunday, January 18th, 2015, Dr. Patricia Rodney and Asha Rodney visited Kennesaw State University to hear Dr. Angela Davis speak in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. At the book signing afterwards, Dr. Davis remarked how she often assigns Dr. Walter Rodney's books in her courses. Dr. Davis and Dr. Patricia Rodney have known each other since the 1980s.



Dr. Verene Shepherd, pictured here with Dr. Patricia Rodney, penned the Afterword to the latest edition of *The Groundings with My Brothers* published by The Walter Rodney Press. Dr. Rodney visited Barbados for the presentation of the newly re-published book to Dr. Shepherd.



First year students, (L) Brenden Simonson and (R) Carlton Nyandebvu, from Kennesaw State University's African and African Diaspora Studies program with Dr. Patricia Rodney. She was kind enough to autograph the books for the students.

WALTER RODNEY REMEMBERED

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa at 40

Michael O. West

How Europe underdeveloped Africa. That is a statement, not a question. The book that bears that name, like so many other notable literary events, is something of a historical accident. But for circumstances beyond the control of the author, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (HEUA) likely would never have been written.

A revolution of sorts happened in and around 1968, a revolution that was global in scope. HEUA may be seen as a lineal descendant of that revolution. Its author, theretofore a little-known lecturer in African history recently out of graduate school, appeared on the stage of history in 1968, not as an interpreter of historical events but as an actor in them. Black Power was part and parcel of the revolution of 1968. Through no particular fault of his own, except perhaps his involvement in Black Power, Walter Rodney, at the tender age of twenty-six, emerged as both scribe and subject of history.

It is in vain, however, that one peruses the Preface to HEUA for an acknowledgment of the directors of the drama that landed its author on the historical stage, namely the government of Jamaica. Had the Jamaican authorities not ejected Rodney from Jamaica, and then so rudely, HEUA cannot have taken the form it actually did, if indeed it would have been written at all. It is a product of a particular time, and a particular place, that book. It could not have been composed at the University of the West Indies at Mona, Rodney's alma mater and the institution from which, now as a faculty member, the Jamaican government booted him in 1968.

Nor could HEUA have been written at Ibadan. The premier center of African historical studies in early postcolonial Africa, the University of Ibadan, or rather the work then being done there, strongly influenced Rodney's SOAS dissertation. The Ibadan school stood out for its loud rejection of the colonial master narrative and, alternatively, its unrelenting emphasis on indigenous self-consciousness and self-organization. In fine, Ibadan became synonymous with African agency, as iconically inscribed in K. O. Dike's 1956 book, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta*.

The Ibadan approach is everywhere evident in Rodney's dissertation, which appeared in book form in 1970 as *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast*. Dike's opus had focused on a single nation-state in formation, notably Nigeria. A History of the Upper Guinea Coast was more adventuresome, roaming freely along the upper West African littoral, and crossing Portuguese, French and British territories with cheerful abandon—too much abandon, it turned out, for the chiefs of African studies, as always fleet of poison pen, which they gleefully unsheathed in reviewing the book of the now infamously radical Rodney.

Indeed, given the spatial and epistemic parameters of his intellectual project, Ibadan would have been a natural fit for Rodney as a freshly-minted PhD. But it would not come to pass. The Nigerian coup of 1966, soon to be followed by the civil war, foreclosed for Rodney the Ibadan option. With or without the civil war, though, Rodney a priori had ruled out taking a job in Nigeria. He abhorred

Nigerian politics, which (then as now) was riddled with opportunism, corruption and neocolonial intrigues.

On leaving graduate school, Rodney went to the University of Dar es Salaam. Viewed from the standpoint of historical scholarship, and more particularly Rodney's specialty, West African history, Dar was a poor substitute for pre-civil war Ibadan. But Dar repaid politically whatever historiographical – I dare not say intellectual – loss Rodney's absence from Ibadan may have entailed. Dar offered a window unto the experiment in African socialism then underway in Tanzania, where Rodney arrived in 1967, the year of the Arusha Declaration, perhaps postcolonial Africa's most original political document. Tanzania offered a budding Rodney a unique opportunity to merge, on African soil, his learning and his politics.

But it was in Jamaica, to which he decamped after not quite a year at Dar, where Rodney really set out, in his own locution, to put African history in the service of the black revolution. That was his main subject, in and out of Mona, where he joined the faculty at the beginning of that fateful year of 1968. The same subject, African history in the service of the black revolution, also became the focus of Rodney's address to the Congress of Black Writers in Montreal, Canada, in October 1968.

The Jamaican government loathed the one nearly as much as it did the other, African history and the black revolution, seemingly confirming Rodney's thesis of an indissoluble link between the two. In a corresponding antithesis, Rodney was declared a prohibited immigrant on returning to Jamaica from the Congress of Black Writers, the government refusing to even allow him off the plane on which he had arrived from Canada, lest his contagious Black Power feet again should pollute Jamaican soil. It remained for the Mona students, soon to be overtaken by less decorous urban youths, to supply the synthesis. Rodney was back in Canada, but the so-called Rodney riot, as the rising his banning sparked became known, was underway.

It was not the first time in living memory that a rebellion in the Caribbean had taken on the name of a particular individual. There were, for instance, the 1937 Butler riots in Trinidad, named after the activist Uriah Butler. In or out of the Caribbean, however, history has likely recorded few instances of an academic, and then one as young as Rodney, being accorded a similar eponymous distinction.

Turned out of Mona, where he had sought to repay a debt to the Caribbean masses, to whose toil and taxes he said he owed his education, Rodney returned to Dar. Three years later *HEUA* appeared. It was an intellectually vibrant place, Dar, during the period of *HEUA*'s gestation. The university hosted a Babel of expatriate academics from all over Africa and the world, many of them drawn to Tanzania by the Arusha Declaration and what it represented. Like Rodney, a number of these individuals were so many castaway stones, having been refused by the builders of other universities in other countries. In combination with others, they coalesced into the core of the social sciences at Dar, the chief cornerstone of the university in its radical incarnation.

Tanzania, however, was not just a magnet for loose-footed academics. The country also served as a base for practically every African liberation movement east of the River Congo. Freedom fighters from South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola flocked to Tanzania. Some of those freedom fighters were men and women of higher learning, even academics, such

as the FRELIMO leader and Syracuse University PhD Eduardo Mondlane. In the lingo of the era, Tanzania was a frontline state. This fact, as much as the cosmopolitanism of the university, formed the prehistory of Rodney's book. The conjunction of forces, intellectual and political, explains why *HEUA*, as we have come to know and love it, could only have been produced at Dar.

In the Preface, Rodney explained that his objective was "to try and reach Africans who wish to explore further the nature of their exploitation, rather than to satisfy the 'standards' set by our oppressors and their spokesmen in the academic world." He succeeded wondrously in both endeavors. In and out of Africa, explorers of the nature of African exploitation erupted in cries of hosanna. As anticipated, too, *HEUA* greatly displeased the oppressors of Africa and their academic handmaidens. Publicly, the chiefs of African studies met *HEUA* mostly with stony silence. The poison pens that greeted *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast* remained sheathed this time around, replaced by a conspiracy of silence. The few Africanists who deigned to speak up, generally protested that *HEUA* had compromised standards, if not abandoned them entirely, most appallingly in the neglect of that fetish of western academic historiography, the footnote; and abjured the book's supposed tendentious character and polemical tone, the very qualities that so electrified activists.

The carping condemnations were academic, in more ways than one. Rodney had written nothing less than a historical manifesto of the African revolution. And revolutionary chronicle, Rodney had learned at the feet of his teacher and interpreter of revolution, C. L. R. James, is too urgent and hallowed to bow before the golden calf of academic objectivity. Speaking in 1971, the year before *HEUA* appeared, James had noted: "you can't write a well-balanced history of a revolution, because a revolution is something that creates disorder and unbalances everything. And if you are going to write on both sides, you write nothing!" How Europe Underdeveloped Africa is not nothing. It is something. It is, in fact, something else. Then, as now, it has something to say to struggling humanity in and out of Africa. Now, as then, its message ought command our attention.

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REMEMBRANCES

MAYA ANGELOU

April 1928 - May 2014

Any attempt at chronicling the life of Dr. Angelou will fall short of embodying the totality of her actions, let alone her spirit and influence. Even her seven autobiographies weren't enough space to contain the life of the poet, author, dancer, actress, singer, activist, producer, professor, director, journalist, and traveler. She spent time in Ghana and Egypt, and participated in the great expatriate African American community in the former, in which Du Bois, Malcolm X, and others were an integral part.



YURI KOCHIYAMA

May 1921 - June 2014

A true Human Rights activist, Kochiyama stood and struggled in solidarity with all oppressed groups. Her passion for service called her to a number of organizations and communities, including Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity, the 1977 struggle for Puerto Rican independence at the Statue of Liberty, fought for and won recompense for Japanese American internment survivors, worked on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners, and many other movements.



ALI AL'AMIN MAZRUI

February 1933 - October 2014

Admittedly grounded in a more liberal perspective than Walter Rodney, Dr. Mazrui also poignantly utilized a critical historical analysis to decolonize the intellectual and popular representation of Africa. A prolific writer, he penned nearly thirty books in his life, including *Julius K. Nyerere's Legacy*, *Towards a Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition*, and *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. The long-serving founder of the Institute for Global Cultural Studies at S.U.N.Y. Binghamton, he was an active participant in the 1998 international conference, "Engaging Walter Rodney's Legacy"; and was the inaugural Walter Rodney Distinguished Professor of the University of Guyana in 1997, a position he held until 1999.



THE WALTER RODNEY PAPERS

The Walter Rodney Papers are available for viewing and research in the Archives and Special Collections of the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library.

In 2003, the Walter Rodney Papers were donated by the Rodney family to the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center. The Collection is the largest and most comprehensive collection of writings, speeches, correspondence, photographs and documents created by or about Walter Rodney anywhere in the world.

The Walter Rodney Foundation also maintains an up-to-date bibliography of all books, papers, journals and articles written by and about Walter Rodney.

The Walter Rodney Papers span the years 1960–1987, with the bulk of the collection from the period 1970–1979. The collection provides insight into Walter Rodney’s life as a scholar and an activist, primarily revealed through his writings and teaching.

Included are:

- Scholarly achievements of Walter Rodney,
- Published and unpublished speeches, lectures, journal articles, book reviews, chapters in books, and drafts of books he authored,
- Employment papers, syllabi, reports, exams, student papers, and other teaching materials,
- Lectures, including “Historians and Revolutions,” “Black People in the Americas,” and “West African History in the 19th Century”,
- Letters written to Walter Rodney from students, colleagues, community and political activists, publishers and editors, members of cultural and political organizations, community and labor groups, and educational associations,
- Speaking Invitations/Engagements that demonstrate Walter Rodney’s popularity as a speaker and the international audience that embraced him,
- Walter Rodney’s involvement in the WPA and the WPA’s political positions and organizational structure during its formative years, and
- Audio recordings of Walter Rodney lecturing at universities, conferences and rallies, including his last public speech given at a rally.

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